SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

Saron's Mission: ***Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!!***

Joe Ulrey, Saron Congregational Council President
Cell: 313-718-2563
Email: josephulrey@yahoo.com

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
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bradley717@gmail.com

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist
Email: pianoladyijg@yahoo.com

Ken Boyd, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

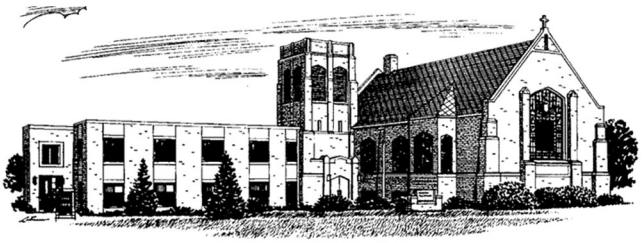
Typical Sunday at Saron:

Fall, Winter and Spring (**began Sept 8**):
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am Learning Hour for Ages 3-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer (begins May 25, 2025):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

As with last month, the call committee has been busy. We have completed 2nd interviews, in-person and more in-depth, with 2 candidates. After much discussion, it was decided not to go any further with 1 of them. For the other, we are reviewing recorded sermons and checking with references to make sure we have as much information as possible to determine if they might be a good match for Saron. Additionally, we are told there is at least one other potential candidate that has been reviewing our paperwork and talking with Bishop Satterlee to determine if we may be a good fit. Please keep the call committee in your prayers as they do this most important task.

Pastor Vicky, thankfully, supported Saron through the holiday season and will continue until January 5. After that, she will be working with other congregations until possibly April if we are still in need. She will be missed!

Now a warning... Get ready to hear from the nominating committee as we get closer to our annual congregation meeting. Saron works because we have had a strong tradition of members being actively involved and sharing their gifts.

Thank you all for sharing your gifts this holiday season, and especially Amanda for gracefully taking on so much.

Joe Ulrey, Council President

Annual Meeting

Mark your calendar for **Sunday, January 26, 2025**! We will join together at noon for a potluck in the dining room then move back to the sanctuary at **1pm** to hear council and committee reports, approve the 2025 spending plan, elect new council members, and more! All voting members are strongly encouraged to attend. Guests are welcome to join for lunch and listen at the meeting. Watch for details in the bulletins and weekly emails.

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 9am-1pm
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)
Ken Boyd (Bookkeeper):
Thursday Mornings and by Appointment

If you or your loved one is need of a visit or pastoral care, please contact Ed Staude. He will get you in touch with the correct person. Ed's contact info is 636/288-1016 or staude.edmund@gmail.com.

Other questions or concerns during the pastoral transition can be addressed to the appropriate council member or liaison:
President - Joe Ulrey
Vice President - Fran Bolson
Secretary - Claudia Staude
Treasurer - Ed Brunner
Worship - Erik Bergh (or Krin Jurgensen, Worship Chair)
Learning - Fran Bolson or Claudia Staude
Outreach - Sally Schmuhl or Jim Manore
Facilities - Steve Cook or Ed Brunner
Youth - Chuck Knebl
Support - Jim Manore (or Don Hafer, Support Chair)
Hospitality - Merrily Smith

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph;
John Olson is at Woodland Terrace in Bridgman.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

1/2 Sophie de la Foret
1/3 Kealana Gulley
1/14 T.J. Koehler
1/15 Colin Ashley
1/15 Pat Breyen
1/15 Meredith Hammer
1/15 Walter Schmuhl
1/16 Jonah Rood
1/18 Hayley Frey
1/19 Claire Carter
1/19 Willow Davis
1/19 Katherine Nadeau
1/23 Don Hafer
1/24 James Hicks
1/25 Karen Johnson
1/27 Kathi Anserello
1/28 Rev Wayne Shearier
1/28 John Taylor
1/29 Ken Boyd
1/31 Carly Knauf

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

1/1 Linda & Charles Pater
1/2 James & Jennifer Nicholas
1/19 Steven & Denise Cook

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

Volunteers have finished painting the ceiling & walls in the new teen lounge and the ping pong table is up! The inspirational mural, designed and painted by Keith Stevens, will hopefully be installed sometime in January. We've also purchased two loveseats and two comfy chairs for down there to update the seating options. Next up for painting is the current Confirmation room which will transition to be the new Sunday School room as we rearrange some areas for better flow. These updates were made possible by Fortify & Fly funds and are the early steps in a larger renovation plan for the Education Wing that will span over several years (unrelated to Fortify & Fly). You are always encouraged to head down and check out the progress!

We are also hoping to have the new signage installed on the outside of the building (alley side) soon after the 2025 budget is approved. Adding this lettering and a cross with the ELCA logo will bring attention to the doors that we now use as the front entrance, especially for those new to the area or for guests at weddings/funerals. We also intend to put smaller lettering on the glass near the doors themselves with information such as the service times to make it look more professional and welcoming.

Worship

NEW: ASSISTED HEARING DEVICES

Our new sound system in the sanctuary came with headphones to assist those having difficulty hearing the worship service. If you are interested, ask Marcus if you can try one out.

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we have Sensory Bags available for use. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your prayer petitions (concerns or thanksgivings) via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made online via a link in our Thursday email. You may include as much, or little, detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are invited to be part of this Monday group at noon.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. You don't even have to pray aloud, if you would prefer to pray quietly. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. **Flowers are now $40 per vase**, beginning 1/1/25. Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then please **return the vase.**

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex, including clipboards with coloring pages and children's bulletins. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions with Marilyn Lucy (269/759-3464). We can also use more volunteers!

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

January 5: Second Sunday of Christmas
Jeremiah 31:7:14
Psalm 147:12-20
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1: 10-18

January 12: Baptism of Our Lord
Isaiah 43:1-7
Psalm 29
Acts 8:14-17
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

January 19: Second Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 36:5-10
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
John 2:1-11

January 26: Third Sunday after Epiphany
Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 12:12-31a
Luke 4:14-21

Special thanks to Mia Bradley, Hunter Zwar, Ava Osgood and Alaina Bradley for taking leadership roles during the Youth Christmas Service on Dec 15. They did the readings, ushered and assisted during communion. We also mega appreciate Elizabeth Gaspari helping the Sunday School kids with their skit. They could not have done it without her driving the narrative.

The teens hung out with Scott for a little Christmas donut party on Dec 15 before the Youth Christmas Service. We will start looking at dates and plan our annual taco/nacho bar and pool party for some time this winter.

Youth group (middle school & high school age) typically meets once per month after the late service for food, fun and fellowship. Friends are always welcome! **Contact Scott at scottgaspari@outlook.com with any questions or to be added to the email list.**

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

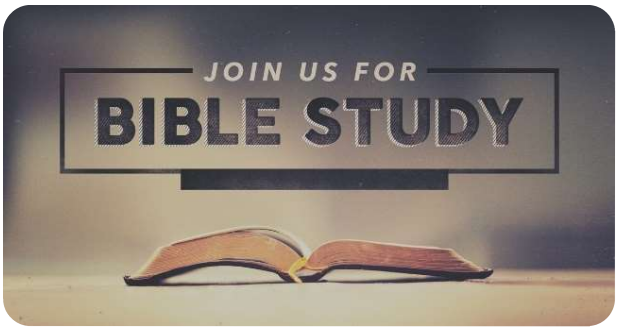
We have many educational options to fit your needs and schedule. Always feel welcome to join us, at any time and for as many sessions as works for you.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

We have opportunities for many ages and stages!

The Sunday Learning Hour (9:40am-10:30am) offers the following options:

- Preschool - Grade 5: Sunday School
- Grades 6-8: Confirmation Classes
- High School - Adult: Adult Forum



TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

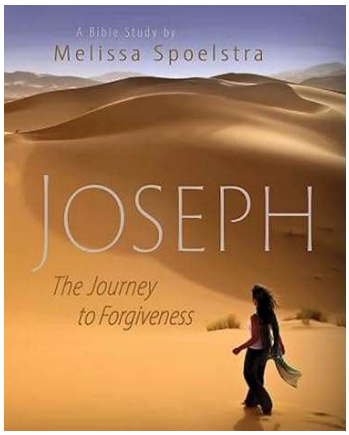
Following our Advent and Christmas break, we will begin meeting again on January 7, 2025. To accommodate inevitable absences due to vacations – who doesn't want to get away from Michigan winter weather? – we decided to do a week-by-week study rather than a longer-term book study. So, from January 7 to February 25, when we will begin our Lenten break, the focus will again be on the lessons and Gospel for the following Sunday. This format worked well last summer and led to some great discussions. We hope to augment our studies this time by personalizing the theme message in each week's readings. How can I apply this message to my day-to-day life? How can this message help me be a better Christian? How can I use this message to make others feel welcome at Saron? The possibilities are endless. Hope you will join us!

We meet Tuesday evenings at 6pm in the upstairs lounge for one hour, then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. All are welcome!

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email
Don Hafer (269/985-3637, haferdon@gmail.com)
Ed Staude (636/288-1016, staude.edmund@gmail.com)
Eric Standen (269/759-3556, dande-standen@sbcglobal.net).

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

The Thursday morning Bible study will start back up on **January 9 at 9:30am**. They will continue working through *Joseph, the Journey to Forgiveness.* The book is available on Amazon. New participants are always welcome. The class runs weekly from **9:30am-11am in the upstairs lounge**. Contact Colleen Lundgren at 269/921-4873 or colleenkl@icloud.com with any questions.



From the website: *This study explores what God has to say to us about grace and forgiveness through Joseph's story of trial and triumph found in Genesis 37-50. As we study his dreams, his betrayers, his dysfunctional family, his struggle to forgive, and his journey toward reconciliation, we'll find truths that echo into our own personal situations as well as practical help for answering common life questions.*

FORUM & fellowship

Forum & Fellowship will be reconvening on **January 8 at 7pm in the upstairs lounge**. We will be continuing with our theme, Sharing God's love with all. Our session on January 8 will center around the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. today. The second session is on January 22 and will look at the experiences of people of Indian heritage. Everyone is always welcome. Bring friends and neighbors!

More upcoming dates/topics:
February 5: People of Hispanic Origin
February 19: Families of One - Singles
April 23: Neighbors with 'Shrinking Worlds'
May 7: Neighbors Who Have Lost Family and Friends
May 21: Neighbors Struggling with Mental Health

Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.

We will not meet in January. It's a good thing too as our book for February 2 is *Caste: the Origins of our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson and will require extra reading time. It will be a challenge to complete and a challenge to discuss. New York Times ranks this book as the "keynote nonfiction book of the American century thus far." It examines the unspoken caste system that has shaped America and how our lives are still defined by a hierarchy of human division. Very timely for sure. So, take the challenge, come join us **February 2 at 6:30pm in the upstairs lounge**, and help open a new year of reading. All are welcome just as all opinions are welcome and needed. Questions or to be added to our email list, please contact Kathy Cowall at 269/428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

Books are the quietest and most constant of friends: they are the most accessible and wisest of counselors, and the most patient of teachers.
-Lost in Bookland

Women of the ELCA

SARON CHURCH WOMEN

Thanks to everyone who participated in the bake sale on Dec 8. Proceeds from that date came to $676. Continued donations on Dec 15 totaled an additional $78. The grand total of **$754** will be given to the Saron Mentor Family Fund. Thanks again for all your generous support.

Donations can be made year-round to the Mentor Family Fund. Questions about this outreach program should be directed to Linda Paper at 269/369-1178.

DEBORAH CIRCLE

Deborah Circle Christmas dinner will be held at the home of Linda Pater on **January 8 at 6pm**. A carpool will leave the church at 5:30pm for those who wish to join it. Everyone should bring a dish to share (not dessert) and also a monetary gift for the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen.

Contact Melanie at 269/449-8399 with any questions.

INSTALLATION

On Sunday, January 12, the following Saron Church Women Officers and Leaders will be installed:

President: Melanie McCammon
Vice President: Linda Pater
Secretary: Mary Kynast
Treasurer: Denise Cook
Mission Action Chair: Colleen Lundgren
Church Women United Rep: Irma Gorman

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for at least 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

THE BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN™ HEART-TO-HEART™

Simple food, honestly sourced and lovingly made creates connections, gives fuel to the fight, and starves ignorance and apathy. -Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen

On November 28, the Thanksgiving meal was provided to the Soup Kitchen by Grand Mere Inn. Desserts were donated by Keith Stevens in memory of his wife Jan, who was the coordinator of Saron's meal at the Soup Kitchen for many years. Thanks, Keith!

If you are able to help with the prep and serving or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

NOISY OFFERING

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

We receive a noisy offering
(or those not-so-noisy bills)
on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to
ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your continued support!

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

The first step in getting involved, is getting informed. Register to receive their communications at https://swmichinterfaith.org/contact1

EYE GLASS COLLECTION

Lions RECYCLE For Sight

Do you have old glasses sitting in a drawer? Lions Club has provided a collection box in the narthex. We have several members who are Lions that can deliver our glasses to the club where they will do more good. Thank you!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Lindsay Gaspari: 847/373-8826 or lindsay.gaspari@yahoo.com

The Good Gifts program will run through Sunday, January 5. There are order forms next to the Good Gifts tree in the narthex or you can email or contact the church office to arrange sponsorship remotely.

Support

The Support Committee typically meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with a brokerage firm to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Ed Brunner at ebrunner54@gmail.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

Other Bits of News

Slots on SignUpGenius have been added all the way through the end of May!

As we transition to a new pastor, it is vital to have volunteer spots filled and filled **EARLY** to avoid the stress of last-minute assignments. Please use the links in the weekly email to fill a reader, usher, or building closer spot for NEXT week, or ideally NEXT month, rather than waiting until right before to see if we have a need for Sunday. This would be a huge help. Thank you!!!

Saron Lutheran Church

1875 | 150th Anniversary | 2025

Generations of Serving & Sharing God's Love

- Get Involved! -

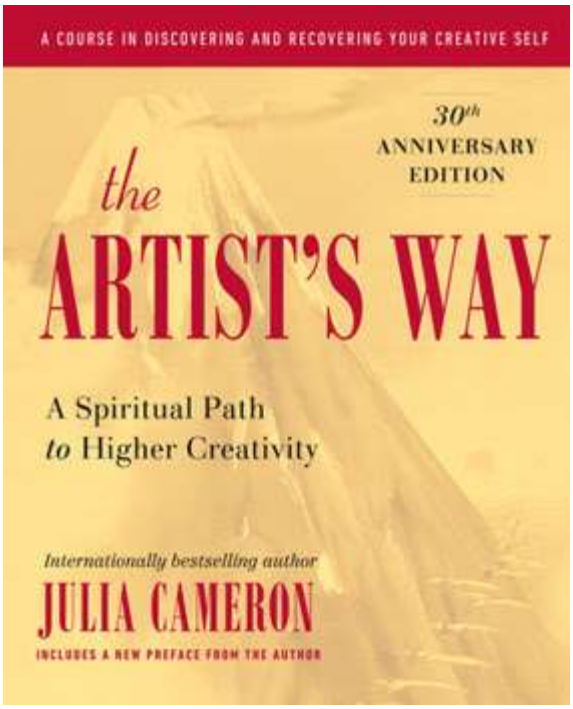
Our goal is to have an event each month, starting in January and ending with the finale in August. There is room for everyone to get involved. Let the chair know that you'd like to help. We will update this list as it evolves.

- January 12: Kick-off Event – Merrily Smith
- February 9: Super Chili Bowl – Ed Staude
- March ?: Trivia Event – Scott Gaspari
- April 20: Easter Pancake Breakfast – Fran Bolson
- May 10: Blossomtime Parade Lunch – Judi Huff
- May 10: Blossomtime Parade Entry – Need Chair
- June 1: Media Group Photo – Amanda Bradley
- July ?: Outing to Sporting Event – Kristen Harper
- August 10: Worship Service Planning – Marcus Roll
- August 10: Meal Deco & Program – Kristen Harper
- Commemorative Project Planning – Marilyn Lucy
- Fundraising – Ken Boyd
- Historical Research & Documenting – Jane Ulrey
- New Church Photo Directory – Kathie Bradley

- August 10, 2025 -

We will have a celebratory worship with Bishop Craig Satterlee at 10am, followed by a dinner at Union & Social, a beautiful venue in St. Joseph. Keep this date open during your travel planning for next year!

UPCOMING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY


A COURSE IN DISCOVERING AND RECOVERING YOUR CREATIVE SELF
30th ANNIVERSARY EDITION
the ARTIST'S WAY
A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity
Internationally bestselling author
JULIA CAMERON
INCLUDES A NEW PREFACE FROM THE AUTHOR

If you are looking for more…
If you are at a turning point in your life…
If you long for the creativity you had as a child…
If you are curious and enjoy meeting new people…

You are invited to join facilitators Cynthia Caruso and Julie Bender as they lead a 14 week spiritual journey to a deeper relationship with one's own creativity and the Creator.

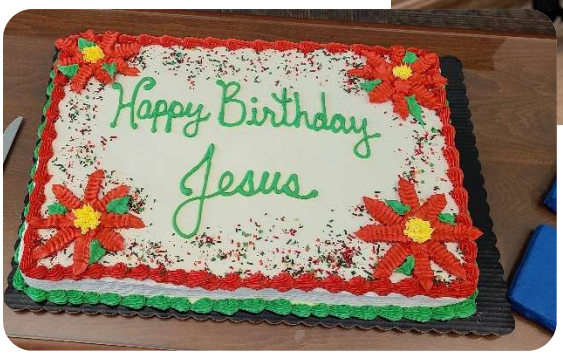
Thursdays, beginning January 9
6:30pm-8pm at Saron

The text they will be using, *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron, can be purchased on Amazon or wherever you buy books. There is no cost to take part in the journey.

For more information or to reserve a spot, call Cynthia Caruso at (505) 870-2201 or email her at cwcaruso@alumni.ucdavis.edu.

Thank you to the many, many volunteers that helped the staff pull off Advent & Christmas this year. Those two with the flowers might be amongst the prettiest (in this mom's opinion) but it took dozens of individuals to plan, direct, decorate, fold, assist, read, serve, set-up, tear-down, and clean-up. We do not take you for granted. We see the effort you give and we appreciate the time you spend.
Thank you.

GLORIA


Happy Birthday
Jesus

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

JANUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

Saron Lutheran Church

1875 | 150th Anniversary | 2025

Generations of Serving & Sharing God's Love

150th Anniversary Year Kickoff Celebration

Sunday, January 12

Join us in creating new memories as we commemorate our past!

JANUARY 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 	**2** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**3**	**4**
5 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**6** Noon Prayer Group	**7**	**8** 9am Helping Hands	**9** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**10**	**11**
12 **150th Kickoff Celebration** 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**13** Noon Prayer Group	**14** 8pm Support Meeting	**15** 9am Helping Hands	**16** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**17**	**18**
19 8:30am Worship NO Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**20** Noon Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**21**	**22** 9am Helping Hands	**23** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **SOUP KITCHEN**	**24**	**25**
26 8:30am Worship NO Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option **Noon Potluck** **1pm Annual Meeting**	**27** Noon Prayer Group	**28**	**29** 9am Helping Hands	**30** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**31**	